Paltry Collections on Armed Forces Flag Day

341. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that due to lack of publicity and adequate initiative on the part of his Ministry, there have been paltry collections of fund on the Armed Forces Flag Day in the States;

(b) the amount collected on Armed Forces Flag Day during the years 1996, 1997 and 1998 in the country;

(c) whether Government propose to disband the collections on that Day in view of poor response from the people; and

(d) the initiatives Government have taken to step up collection of fund by providing adequate publicity to the Armed Forces Flag Day?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) Collection for the Armed Forces Flag Day Fund are made by the State/ UT Governments and the Kendirya Sainik Board. During the years 1996 and 1997, the collections for the Armed Forces Flag Day Fund by the States and Kendriya Sainik Board were as under. The figures for collection during 1998 will be available in 1999.

Year	Collection through the States	Collection through Kendriya Sainik Board
1996	Rs. 10,87,95,226/-	Rs. 3,93,855/-
1997	Details awaited from States	Rs. 14,80,914/-

(c) and (d) There is no proposal to discontinue collection of funds on the Armed Forces Flag Day. Adequate publicity is given through newspapers, Doordarshan and Akashvani. The Governors and the Chief Ministers of the States have been requested by Raksha Mantri, through letters, this year to take personal interest in enthusing the people to contribute more generously for the Fund.

Special Counter Insurgency Allowance for Soldiers

342. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that his predecessor had announced on 21st July, 1997 for an ex-gratia payment of Rs. 7.5 lakh each for relatives of the soldiers killed in counter insurgency operations in Jammu and Kashmir and North-East States as also the special Counter Insurgency Allowance for soldiers as recommended by the Fifth Pay Commission would be improved and decided within a week;

(b) whether such allowances have been approved and are being paid; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) During his visit to Chandigarh and meeting with war widows, the former Defence Minister, Shri Mulayam Singh Yadav had announced that the Government is considering the increase in ex-gratia payment to the next of kin(s) of Service personnel killed in counter-insurgency operations to Rs. 7.5 lakhs.

Based on the recommendations of the Fifth Central Pay commission, the Government have increased the amount of ex-gratia payment to the next of kin(s) of Armed Forces personnel who die in harness in the performance of their bonafide official duties. The following ex-gratia lumpsum compensation will be paid to the next of kin(s) of the personnel: